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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the attitudes of teachers towards innovative compensatory educational programs which they were required to implement in their classrooms. Twenty-five first, second, and third grade teachers were surveyed. Every teacher was required to teach at least three compensatory programs in reading, science, and mathematics in addition to the regular curricula. Teachers responded to a questionnaire relevant to teacher concerns about new programs in areas of management, degree of personal involvement, and program impact on students. The findings of the study indicated that teachers were seldom asked about their desire to use these programs. Teachers had limited knowledge of compensatory programs. Teachers wanted to interact and learn more about compensatory programs. Teachers lacked confidence in these programs. Finally, teachers were interested in modifying instructional approaches; however, they were not interested in collaborating with others to disseminate the programs. (Author/JP)

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TEACHER ATTITUDES TOWARDS COMPENSATORY EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN THE DALLAS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

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INTRODUCTION

School administrators involved in the large-scale implementation of innovative programs often overlook the feelings and opinions of the person responsible for the actual implementation of the program, the classroom teacher. No matter how carefully designed a program is, it cannot be said to be teacher proof. In addition, it is usually practically and financially impossible for project management to insure that the program is being implemented as designed once it has been broadly disseminated. Therefore, in order to aid in the proper administration of a program at the very least a program should be undertaken to monitor teachers' opinions of the programs.

The purpose of this study was to assess teachers' general attitudes towards the compensatory education programs they were required to teach during the nine months preceding the administration of this survey. It was hoped that such a survey would provide information to help correct shortcomings in the project management-teacher relationship.

In order to fully understand the results of this study it is necessary to review the situation which existed in the 50 Title I schools of the Dallas Independent School District (DISD) during the 1975-76 school year. Teachers in kindergarten through third grade in each of these schools had a minimum of three (and some as many as six) compensatory education programs resident in their classes. Programs in reading, mathematics, and social studies were present in each of these classes. In addition, some classes also had programs in bilingual education, music, art, affective education, and science. By state and federal guidelines these programs were considered supplementary

to the regular curriculum. As such, these programs were to be taught in addition to rather than instead of the regular curriculum. Based upon a simple comparison between the amount of time required to teach the regular and supplementary programs and the length of the school day it was found that the task was impossible.

Process evaluation performed by the Department of Research and Evaluation indicated that the teachers felt frustrated by the fact that they were not completing their assigned task. They also felt that the training they received on the proper implementation of these projects was inadequate.

This study assessed the concerns of the DISD Title I teachers at the end of the school year.

METHOD

Subjects

The sample consisted of all first, second, and third grade teachers in 25 Title I schools in the Dallas Independent School District. At these three grade levels, every teacher was required to teach at least three compensatory programs in reading, science, and mathematics in addition to the District's basal curricula. Two hundred and fifty-six (256) teachers responded to the questionnaire which was about 90% of the teachers in the sample.

Instrument

The Concerns Questionnaire was based on the Stages of Concern Checklist developed by Hall and Rutherford (1975). The 34-item questionnaire gathers information relevant to teacher concerns about new programs in areas of management, degree of personal involvement and impact on students. Teachers are instructed to respond to the concerns items on a 9-point scale of "not true of me now" to "very true of me now." The teacher responds by marking an answer sheet bubble following each statement. For example:

I am concerned about students' attitude toward
these programs 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

The questionnaire further identifies sex, age, highest degree, grade level taught, number of years in teaching, percentage instructional time for supplementary programs, and a general attitude toward Title I programs.

Procedure

The questionnaires were distributed to the teachers and the responses collected during the first two weeks of May, 1976. Distribution and response collection was accomplished through the interschool mailing system. The response sheets were run through an opscan system and the responses tabulated and recorded on computer tape.

RESULTS

Of the 256 questionnaires returned 248 were retained for further analysis. Eight questionnaires were eliminated because they were completed in such a manner as to make meaningful analysis impossible.

Demographic data were collected on the respondents in the following areas:

1. grade level
2. age
3. highest degree

A crosstabulation of these results are given in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Crosstabulation of Respondents[1]

		Grade			
		K	1	2	3
Degree	Age				
	20-29	14	34	31	14
	30-39	3	13	10	8
Bachelors	40-49	4	6	5	6
	50-59	--	--	4	3
	60-over	--	4	1	1
	20	3	4	2	3
	30	4	9	8	5
Masters	40	2	5	3	4
	50	1	5	5	3
	60-over	--	--	2	1

[1]Teachers not included in this table did not respond to the demographic questions in at least one category.

The responses to the questionnaire were initially analyzed via a principal components, analysis. The results confirmed the results reported by Hall and Rutherford (1975) which indicated that there were seven areas of concern. These were identified by the authors of this paper as:

1. Information Concerns
2. Collaboration Concerns
3. Concerns with Student Outcomes
4. Concerns about Lack of Knowledge
5. Time and Energy Concerns
6. Implementation and Revision Concerns
7. Negativism.

Items loading highly on the information factor dealt with the concerns the teachers had about how their roles would change as a result of these programs. Responses stating that these items were very true of them would indicate the desire for further information. Some items which loaded highly on this factor were:

1. I would like to know what use these programs will have in the immediate future.
2. I would like to have more information on the time and energy required by these programs.
3. I would like to know how my role will change when I am using these programs.

The collaboration component dealt with the desire to communicate with other teachers about the program. These concerns included both a desire to exchange ideas and also to teach others about the program.

Factor three dealt with concerns about how the program was affecting the students. It also tapped the concern teachers had about the students' attitudes to the program.

The items relating to lack of knowledge all indicated that the teachers did not really know what these programs were. Examples of these items are:

1. I don't know what these programs are.
2. I have limited knowledge of these programs.
3. Although I don't know about these programs I am concerned about things in this area.

The fifth factor was concerned with the time and energy requirements of the programs. These items dealt with the feeling that the programs were adding to an already full day.

Items loading highly on the implementation and revision component dealt with concerns about who makes decisions. They also dealt with how input might be made into the system.

The factor labeled as negativism had two items which loaded highly on it. These were:

1. I am not interested in learning about these programs.
2. I know approaches that might work better.

It was felt that this indicated a negative attitude and almost hostility towards these programs.

DISCUSSION

It should be recalled that the teachers were asked to respond to these items on a nine-point scale. The endpoints of this scale are (1) not true of me and (9) very true of me. The factor means were rescaled so that they might be interpreted in a similar manner as the original scale. The results were discussed in relation to the Dallas situation.

The mean score on the information factor was 6.290. This indicates that the teachers were concerned about what these programs would require of them and how other faculty members were handling them. In the DISD teachers in one school seldom have the opportunity to formally interact with teachers in another school on matters that concern compensatory education programs. At best the teachers are brought together to receive instruction from project management personnel as to the implementation of these programs. Generally this is done in fairly large groups that does not allow for interaction on the part of the teachers. In addition, teachers are seldom, if ever, asked if they desire to use these programs. In most cases the advantages of these programs are not explained to the teachers. The responses to items in Factor 1 indicate the teachers do have a desire to interact as well as learn more about the programs.

The second factor tapped the area of collaboration. The factor mean was 4.022. The items which load highly on this item differed from items which concerned themselves with interaction in Factor 1. The items loading on Factor 2 involved working actively with other faculty to spread the use of these programs. A mean of 4.022 indicates that teachers were responding to this item on the lower end of the scale indicating that it was not true of them. This may relate tc the teachers' lack of confidence in the programs

or their feeling that there are too many programs to become actively involved in any of them. In either case the responses indicated a fairly low degree of concern for actively disseminating these programs.

The mean score on the student outcomes factor was 6.058. This indicates that the degree of concern was on the high end of the scale. One should recall that these were teachers in Title I schools. Therefore, they were working with students who have been targeted as needing supplementary programs to aid them in their studies. Although there was an indication of concern in the area of student outcomes it seems to be lower than what one might expect. That is, the teachers indicated that student outcomes were a moderate rather than a high concern. It would seem that if these programs had greater acceptance concerns with student outcomes would be higher.

Items loading on factor 4 indicated teachers' concerns that they had limited knowledge of these programs. The mean score on this factor was 2.980, indicating that teachers felt that this was generally not true of them. However, this mean was not as low as what one might have expected given that the respondents had been teaching these programs for almost an entire school year. This again points out that some problems exist in the implementation of these programs.

The time and energy factor had a mean score of 6.168. This reflects a concern on the part of the teachers about being able to handle all the things that were being asked of them. This feeling is probably based on the fact that they could legitimately claim to be overburdened by the number of programs which they were called upon to teach.

Factor six dealt with implementation and revision decisions. These items dealt with such decisions as revising the instructional approach used

in these programs and modifying the program based on the experiences of their students. The mean score on this factor was 6.389. This can be contrasted with a mean of 4.024 on the collaboration factor. Although they were interested in modifying the programs they were not interested in collaborating with others to disseminate it. A possible explanation of this is, given the teachers' frustration with the programs, they were concerned in participating in anything that might alleviate the burden of these programs. This would be the case in the revision factor but would not be in the collaboration factor.

Factor seven tapped negative feelings towards the programs. This factor had a mean of 4.343. The responses to this factor were in the midrange of the concern scales. In view of the responses for the other factors, the response to this one may be considered almost positive if only because it was not higher.

CONCLUSIONS

Interpretation of the results in light of the DISD situation indicates that emphasis needs to be placed on revising the method in which programs are implemented. Greater concern must be placed on keeping the number of programs in a given classroom at a manageable level. The frustration that this is causing appears to have effected the responses in all the areas of concern making them less than optimal. Additionally more emphasis must be placed in staff development. This could alleviate the teachers' ignorance about certain parts of the program and provide for better implementation.

REFERENCES

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